

From: Public & Professional Affairs Department
Sent: October 21, 2020 4:22 PM
Subject: The Weekly: CPhA's COVID-19 Update for October 21



October 21, 2020

CPhA

PPE best practices published in CPJ

All workers have the right to be protected against infectious disease in the performance of their duties. During the time of a pandemic, these protection controls are even more critical. To help navigate the new realities of PPE requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic, CPhA and its PPE working group developed suggested best practices for PPE use in community pharmacy. "[Personal protective equipment: Suggested best practices for pharmacies during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)" will be published in the November/December issue of the *Canadian Pharmacists Journal*, and is available now at CPJ Online.

Upcoming Virtually Together webinar Pharmacists as opioid stewards: A showcase of the evidence

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Health Canada issued temporary exemptions for prescriptions of controlled substances, including opioids, which provided pharmacists with greater authority to manage opioid prescriptions. Our next Virtually Together webinar, *Pharmacists as opioid stewards: A showcase of the evidence*, takes place October 28 from 1:00-3:00pm EDT. This session will explore the impacts of the recent COVID-driven CDSA exemptions, as well as 4 other mini-sessions highlighting cutting-edge research that demonstrates the value of pharmacist services in opioid stewardship to both patients and the health care system. [Registration](#) is now open.

CPhA's COVID-19 web pages are being updated regularly at www.pharmacists.ca/covid19 and www.pharmacists.ca/covid19fr.

Provincial

Alberta pauses asymptomatic COVID-19 testing

On October 20, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, announced that the province will no longer be testing people without COVID-19 symptoms and have not had contact with anyone who has been infected, [says CBC](#). She says this is necessary to reduce wait times, speed up results and limit the spread of the virus. In mid-September, Alberta dialled back asymptomatic testing, reserving it only for priority groups. In a [tweet](#), Dr. Hinshaw thanked pharmacies that helped with testing and noted that appointments that have already been booked will be honoured until November 4.

Just 5% of Ontario COVID-19 cases have used COVID Alert app to report infection

Only a fraction of Ontario's COVID-19 cases have used the national COVID Alert app to report their infections, hampering the app's effectiveness in slowing the second wave of the pandemic in the province, [says CBC](#). Figures provided by the provincial government show COVID Alert users have reported 1354 cases through the app since its launch on July 31. Given that Ontario has had more than 25,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 since then, this means roughly 5% of those infected with the novel coronavirus have used the app to report their case, which would then warn other users of potential exposure. However, those figures do not mean the app should be written off as a failure, according to public health experts.

National

Fake news creating problems for battling pandemic: Dr Theresa Tam

Canada's chief public health doctor is worried about the amount of false information being floated about the COVID-19 pandemic, [reports the Canadian Press](#). Dr. Theresa Tam says that when false information is spread—either intentionally or not—it does not help public health officials ensure the public has the information they need to make the right choices. “As I reflect on the unprecedented pandemic that we have, there's also I think the pandemic that's occurred in the age of social media, and many different ways in which information is spread faster than the virus itself,” Tam said on October 20 at her regular news conference on Parliament Hill. Both Tam and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau urged Canadians to be responsible about the information they share by verifying it first with multiple and official sources.

25% of Canadians say their mental health is worse than during first wave of COVID-19

Canadians continue to experience mental health difficulties due to the pandemic, with 1 in 4 saying their stress level is higher than during the first COVID-19 wave, [says the Canadian Press](#). The online survey conducted by Leger and the Association for Canadian Studies found that only 19% of Canadians say their mental health is better now than in March and April as infection rates tick up and autumn sets in. However, about 54% said their mental state is about the same as when the coronavirus first struck the country. Participants cited concerns about the length and severity of the pandemic as their biggest source of anxiety, followed closely by social isolation and family health.

Delays in COVID-19 testing results putting long-term care homes at greater risk

Delays plaguing Canada's COVID-19 testing programs are preventing nursing homes from quickly identifying infected residents and staff, and controlling the spread of infections, just as a growing number of facilities are declaring outbreaks, [reports the Globe and Mail](#). The problem is most acute in Canada's 2 most populous provinces. The number of long-term care homes with outbreaks in Ontario has quadrupled to 86 over the past month and 58 residents have died. In Quebec, 39 homes have outbreaks. The virus has sickened just over a third of the residents at Quebec's CSSS Du Granit in Lac-Mégantic, the province's hardest-hit home.

International

CVS, Walgreens to administer COVID-19 vaccines to US nursing homes

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has signed agreements with CVS Health and Walgreens Boot Alliance for their pharmacies to administer COVID-19 vaccines to residents of long-term care facilities whenever a safe and effective vaccine is authorized, [Reuters reports](#). Under the partnership, residents and staff of all long-term care facilities like nursing homes, assisted living facilities, residential care homes and adult family homes across the country can get vaccinated at no out-of-pocket cost.

CVS adds 15,000 workers readying to administer COVID vaccines

CVS Health announced it will hire about 15,000 workers to help with flu season, coronavirus testing and possibly administering COVID-19 vaccines, [reports Bloomberg](#). Two-thirds of the new hires will be pharmacy technicians, the company said. The announcement comes a month after the HHS authorized state-licensed pharmacists to order and administer COVID-19 vaccines to people ages 3 or older, subject to certain requirements.

Pharmacists able to administer unlicensed COVID-19 vaccines following legislation changes

Pharmacists will be able to administer an unlicensed COVID-19 vaccination when one becomes available, following changes to the UK's Human Medicine Regulations (HMR) that came into effect October 16, 2020, [says the Pharmaceutical Journal](#). The amendments follow a [government consultation](#) on the delivery of COVID-19 and flu vaccines using a wider workforce, potentially including pharmacy technicians.

Aggressive behaviour in pharmacies cannot be tolerated: Pharmacy Guild

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has [urged](#) the general public to respect the right of pharmacy staff to safety and courtesy, following an incident in a Sydney pharmacy where a COVID-19 sneeze guard was angrily smashed by a disgruntled customer. Guild national president George Tambassis says he was very disturbed to hear this latest report of aggressive and violent behaviour, stating that “The overwhelming majority of Australians respect and trust their local pharmacy staff, which makes it all the more unacceptable when somebody behaves so poorly.”

Remdesivir fails to prevent COVID-19 deaths in huge trial

A World Health Organization (WHO) [study](#) of more than 11,000 people in 30 countries concluded that remdesivir appeared to have little or no effect on 28-day mortality or length of hospital stays among COVID-19 patients, the [New York Times writes](#). The data have not yet been peer-reviewed or published in a scientific journal. Gilead Sciences, which sells the drug, disputed the conclusion, noting that a variety of drugs and drug combinations had been evaluated under a wide range of circumstances and that more rigorous studies had found a benefit.

Pfizer won't apply for COVID-19 vaccine authorization before mid-November, CEO confirms

Pfizer expects to provide safety data and file for authorization of the COVID-19 vaccine it is developing with BioNTech in mid-November, delaying any clarity on the vaccine until after the November 3 US presidential election, [STAT reports](#). The regulatory filing for the vaccine could come as soon as safety data is available in the third week of November. The timelines are not new, based on disclosures the company has previously made. But Pfizer had previously said a vaccine could be available by October, and the Pfizer CEO's statement underscores the tense political conditions surrounding the race for a vaccine. According to [Forbes](#), the [company says](#) it hopes to make 100 million doses available this year, should the vaccine be granted regulatory approval, with plans to manufacture 1.3 billion doses in 2021.

COVID vaccine storage issues could leave 3 billion without access

From factory to syringe, the world's most promising COVID-19 vaccine candidates need non-stop sterile refrigeration to stay potent and safe, [reports the Associated Press](#). But despite enormous strides in equipping developing countries to maintain the vaccine “cold chain,” nearly 3 billion of the world's 7.8 billion people live where temperature-controlled storage is insufficient for an immunization campaign to bring COVID-19 under control. The result: poor people around the world who have been among the hardest hit by the virus pandemic are also likely to be the last to recover from it.

Vast majority of air cargo companies are unprepared to transport COVID-19 vaccines

As much of the world focuses on vaccine development to alleviate the pandemic, a new survey finds that just 28% of the air cargo companies that will play the highly crucial, behind-the-scenes role of transporting COVID-19 vaccines feel prepared for the job, [STAT writes](#). At the same time, 19% of these companies report that they feel “very unprepared” and only 54% of air-freight providers currently have some of the necessary equipment for handling vaccines.

UK government signs contract for COVID-19 challenge trial

The UK government has signed a contract to develop a controversial COVID-19 human challenge trial, where participants will be deliberately infected in a controlled environment with coronavirus to test whether a vaccine is effective, [Pharmaphorum reports](#). Contract research organization hVIVO, a subsidiary of Open Orphan, has signed the contract with the UK government to develop the trial model, which involves manufacture of the challenge virus and the first in-human characterization study for the virus. [Challenge trials](#) are controversial because of the risks involved with infecting patients with a potentially lethal virus, although with COVID-19 these could be managed, as most people develop mild symptoms and those at high risk of a serious infection are relatively easy to identify.

Newsworthy

A closer look: Canada's homegrown COVID-19 vaccine candidates

More than 100 groups around the world are racing to produce a vaccine against COVID-19, with most of the attention focused

on front-runners currently in [phase 3 clinical trials](#) in the US and overseas. But Canada has also invested in some COVID-19 vaccines in development here, and there are more than half a dozen Canadian vaccine candidates [registered with the WHO](#), at least one of which is already being tested on humans, CBC reports. They represent a wide range of technologies, from more traditional protein subunit vaccines to newer technologies such as replicating viral vector and DNA vaccines. The options, if approved, would include both needles and a nasal spray.

A viral theory cited by health officials draws fire from scientists

A manifesto urging reliance on “herd immunity” without lockdowns was warmly received by Trump administration officials. But the strategy cannot stem the pandemic, many experts say, in [this New York Times feature](#).

This weekly COVID-19 update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. To unsubscribe, please reply to this email with “Unsubscribe” in the subject line.

Please note that this publication is meant to inform and is not a comprehensive list of information available. Be sure to check with your provincial regulatory authority or advocacy association for province-specific information. While we aim to ensure all information contained in this update is accurate, the situation is evolving rapidly and CPhA does not take responsibility for the content provided by other organizations and sources.